

## Message Text

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51

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 DOTE-00 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 SP-02 /043 W

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R 240930Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1082

INFO USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

USEC BRUSSELS 1859

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COPENHAGEN 1768

EMO. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB DA

SUBJ: BUS STRIKE IN COPENHAGEN SETTLED WITHOUT  
GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

REF: COPENHAGEN 1671

SUMMARY: FIFTEEN-DAY STRIKE THAT PARALYZED BUS TRAFFIC  
IN THE GREATER COPENHAGEN AREA COLLAPSED LATE JUNE 19.  
THE 350 STRIKING CHAUFFEURS RESUMED WORK, WITHOUT  
GAINING ANY CONCESSIONS, WHEN THE LABOR COURT THREATENED  
TO RECOGNIZE THE BUS COMPANY'S RIGHT TO FIRE THEM AND  
EMPLOY NEW DRIVERS. BY REFUSING TO INTERVENE TO END  
THE STRIKE, THE GOVERNMENT STRONGLY UNDERLINED ITS  
DETERMINATION TO HOLD THE LINE ON ITS INCOMES POLICY.  
END SUMMARY.

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1. FIFTEEN-DAY BUS DRIVERS' STRIKE COLLAPSED LATE JUNE 19 WHEN THE SHOP STEWARDS OF THE TWO UNIONS INVOLVED VOTED TO RESUME WORK, DESPITE THEIR FAILURE TO WIN A SINGLE CONCESSION. THE ABRUPT COLLAPSE CAME AS A SURPRISE SINCE THE DRIVERS HAD VOTED ONLY THE DAY BEFORE TO CONTINUE THE STRIKE BY A WIDE MARGIN, 224 TO 30. TOWARD THE END, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF THE STRIKE LAY WITH AN AD HOC STRIKE COMMITTEE WHICH WAS OPPOSED TO THE ELECTED LEADERS OF BOTH UNIONS. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE STRIKERS WERE INFLUENCED BY LEFTIST POLITICAL ELEMENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE UNIONS.

2. THE COURT AGREED TO HEAR A REQUEST FROM THE EMPLOYERS FEDERATION THAT THE BUS COMPANIES BE PERMITTED TO FIRE THE STRIKING DRIVERS AND HIRE NEW EMPLOYEES TO REPLACE THEM, A PROCEDURE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN EXERCISED BY THE COURT SINCE 1956. THE COURT, HOWEVER, GAVE THE STRIKERS A PERIOD OF GRACE UNTIL JUNE 22 TO RECONSIDER THEIR POSITION. WITH THIS CLEAR HINT THAT THE COURT WOULD FIND IN THE EMPLOYERS' FAVOR, THE AD HOC STRIKE COMMITTEE WAS FORCED TO RECOMMEND RESUMPTION OF WORK.

3. THROUGHOUT THE STRIKE, THE GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO INTERVENE AS AN ARBITRATOR ALTHOUGH PUBLIC PRESSURE IN THE LATTER DAYS WAS BEGINNING TO ASSUME SERIOUS PROPORTIONS. THE "OUTSIDE INFLUENCE" ON THE STRIKERS, HOWEVER, CONTRIBUTED TO THE PASSIVE POSITION TAKEN BY THE DANISH TRADE UNION FEDERATION (LO). THE GOVERNMENT SHARED THE APPREHENSIONS OF THE EMPLOYERS FEDERATION THAT A CAVE-IN TO THE BUS DRIVERS' DEMANDS WOULD OPEN THE FLOOD GATES FOR SIMILAR CONCESSIONS ALL ACROSS THE LINE. THERE ARE, AT PRESENT, SOME 20 TO 25 STRIKES IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY, ALL MORE OR LESS TESTS OF THE EMPLOYERS' AND THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE STATUTORY INCOMES POLICY INTRODUCED IN MARCH.

4. THE BUS CONFLICT PLAYED A LARGE PART IN THE FINAL DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT JUNE 20. A REPRESENTATIVE OF MOGENS GLISTRUPS PROGRESS PARTY MOVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT BE DIRECTED TO END THE STRIKE BY JUNE 21. THE IMPLICATION, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS OTHER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT QUICKLY POINTED OUT, WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT USE MILITARY TROOPS EITHER TO DRIVE THE BUSES OR TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR DRIVERS NOT ON STRIKE. THE GOVERNMENT FINESSED THIS MOTION WITH AN ALTERNATIVE MOTION RECOMMENDING THAT IT CONTINUE ITS POLICY OF MEDIATION IN THE STRIKE IN THE HOPE OF AN EARLY SETTLEMENT, A FORMULATION WHICH WAS ACCEPTED BY ALL PARTIES EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS, LEFT SOCIALISTS,

SOCIALIST PEOPLES PARTY, AND THE PROGRESS PARTY.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE PROGRESS PARTY WON SOME NOTORIETY AS FAVORING THE USE OF TROOPS AS STRIKEBREAKERS, THE GOVERNMENT WAS CLEARLY THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY OF THE OUTCOME. ITS REFUSAL TO INTERVENE--ARBITRATION BY SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS USUALLY RESULTS IN A COMPROMISE FAVORABLE TO THE WORKERS---WILL REINFORCE A STRINGENT INTERPRETATION OF THE WAGE LIMITATIONS OF THE INCOMES POLICY.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, WAGES, POLICIES, DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, LABOR STRIKES, MOTOR BUSES, URBAN TRANSPORTATION  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 JUN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** buchantr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975COPENH01768  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750218-1003  
**From:** COPENHAGEN  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750618/aaaaaqj.tel  
**Line Count:** 126  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 COPENHAGEN 1671  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** buchantr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 22 APR 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <22 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by buchantr>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BUS STRIKE IN COPENHAGEN SETTLED WITHOUT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION  
**TAGS:** ELAB, DA  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006